

## **Priscilla Bordayo's Statement**

**5/15/18**

Hi my name is Priscilla Bordayo and I am a local and national advocate for girls who have been sexually abused; this is why...

By the age of 12, I was molested by two family members.

At age 13, I was questioning if I was miscarrying my father's child. (I didn't know what happened to my body.

At age 14, I stood before a judge and lied to protect my family.

At age 15, I was trapped for almost 4 years in a relationship I thought was love.

And then in my early 20s...Well, I took the road less traveled.

By this time, I started to believe the lies; that my experience of sexual abuse and incest were normal.

I come from a large family.

My dad had 14 brothers and sisters, my mom had 8.

My dad was sexually abused by his father.

So my dad repeated the cycle.

Because of what happened to me as a child society says, I should be in a foster home or on the streets. I should be serving jail time or stuck with identity issues.

But I'm not. I am not broken. I am not a statistic.

I chose to rise above what society said I should be. This is because of my faith, forgiveness, redemption, and my Heavenly Father.

I am the first to graduate with a Bachelor's degree in education. I now serve as an advocate for girls who have been sexually abused in Ingham County. I am a motivational speaker, a worship leader at my church and a soon to be author. I serve on the board for The House of Promise; a house for girls who have been rescued from sex-trafficking or who have been severely abused sexually.

Because of my life's experience, this is what I know:

You do not have to repeat the cycle. No matter what your story is, where you come from or what happened to you, those things do not need to define you. As a matter of fact, as a motivational speaker, I encourage others to allow life's negative circumstances to refine them.

I believe hope is a person. His name is Jesus. And members of the house today, you can also be people who instill hope, by creating the necessary change that is still needed to end sexual abuse. As we know, sexual abuse is not bias to one's culture, one's race, one's gender, or to one's economic status. This disease is not a respecter of people. It's actually a very selfish act. This is because sexual abuse doesn't just affect the individual; it tears families, work places and environments apart.

I believe we can create positive change for the victim and their family, through counseling, education on the subject in schools, advocacy so that no one feels alone, reaching out to our local churches to provide spiritual guidance and support, and making room for victims to have a voice. All of these things can play a role in reshaping someone's life.

As far as the perpetrators are concerned, I believe there are man's laws and God's laws and we are to obey both. I also believe that there should always be consequences for crimes committed. But as we know, not everyone gets sentenced to prison for over 100 years, the way Larry Nassar did. Many perpetrators get paroled or have served their time. But when perpetrators never get the help they need to get to the heart and root of the problem that caused them to commit the crime to begin with, the cycle continues. I'm not by any means trying to excuse their behavior, but rather, I'm trying to identify and develop a plan of action to correct the problem. While being an advocate is an honorable service, not getting to the root of the issue is a disservice and allows for this viscous cycle of crime to continue.

In my opinion, our prison systems can no longer be adult babysitting institutions. We need more counseling and rehabilitation programs that are specifically targeting the crimes they committed. I believe that counseling should not be optional but required in order for inmates to be released; meaning it's a part of their sentence.

Although my research was not all inclusive, the research I did do, showed that counseling was offered for those who met the qualifications for mental illness. In addition, most of the counseling provided was optional. My recommendation would be that all counseling be mandatory and that we redefine what we call and label as mental illness. I believe the mental state of someone who rapes, molests and engages in child pornography should definitely be in question.

I don't know all of the answers and solutions for perpetrators and felons, but I do know that we have to do something so that when prisoners have done their time, they don't get out and recommit the crime, creating even more victims. Either we extend the sentence for sexual abuse or we provide rehabilitation in hopes to get people on the right track.

I personally believe that rehabilitation and counseling should be available and mandatory for every person behind bars: the drug dealer, the addict, the murderer, the prostitute, the fraudulent, the thief and the sexual predator. Even if they have a life sentence, I believe we can't leave people where they are. We have to get to the heart of why people make the decisions that they do.

I believe God made a way for everyone to make it. My passion is to help everyone make it too, both the victim and the perpetrator. I have and I want to include the perpetrator because it's the only way to truly end sexual abuse and the damaging affects it has in our lives and communities.